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AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE EDWARDEAN REVIVALS.¹

SAMUEL PERKINS HAYES.

INTRODUCTION.

In the study of any great popular movement it is essential to take account of the mental, moral and physical conditions of the people involved. It has therefore seemed best to recall very briefly some of the most important events in the early history of New England in order to assist us in forming a clear conception of the general state of affairs in the early part of the eighteenth century.

The history of New England might be summarized in one large word—*struggle*. Nature gave almost nothing. From the thin, rocky soil, bare subsistence could be won only by incessant labor and the strictest frugality; the climate made a severe strain upon the stoutest constitutions. Indian wars drained the colonial treasury and almost exhausted the nervous energy of the colonists. In the early period, internal theological conflicts were incessant and in the provincial period, friction with the mother country constantly sapped the vital force of the people. The following list of events will give some idea of the "temper of the times."

- 1620. Founding of the Plymouth Colony.
- 1630. Founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- 1633-5. Hostilities between Plymouth Colony and French.
- 1636. Banishment of Roger Williams.
- 1636-8. Banishment of Anne Hutchinson.
- 1635-7. Migrations to Connecticut.
- 1637. Pequot War.
- 1637. First Synod of Churches.
- 1640-4. End of Puritan Exodus.
- 1643. Confederation of the Colonies.
- 1646-51. Presbyterian Cabal and Cambridge Platform.
- 1649-51. Oliver Cromwell and the Commonwealth.

¹ This paper is one of a series written by the members of a Seminary in Church History engaged last year in a study of the rise and development of the "New England Theology." The special purpose of this paper was to trace some of the relations between this theology and the revival of religion so aptly named "The Great Awakening." The paper has been somewhat revised.

- 1656-61. Persecution of the Quakers.
- 1657-62. Half-Way Covenant.
- 1660. Restoration of Charles II.
- 1671-86. Struggle with Charles—Overthrow of the Charter.
- 1674-78. King Philip's War.
- 1686-89. Tyranny of Andros.
- 1692. New Charter of William and Mary.
- 1689-97. King William's War.
- 1690. First Colonial Congress.
- 1692-3. Salem Withcraft.
- 1696-1749. Suppression of Colonial Manufactures.
- 1702-10. Queen Anne's War.
- 1722-25. War with the Northeastern Indians.
- 1734-5. Revivals in Northampton and vicinity.
- 1740-1. Great Awakening.
- 1744-48. King George's War.
- 1755-60. French and Indian War.

But especially important for our purpose is the religious history of New England. The great ideal in early Massachusetts was the founding of a Puritan Theocracy—a state fashioned upon scriptural models and ruled according to scriptural teachings. This state was to be composed entirely of Puritan Christians; all others must be rigorously excluded; only church members were to be citizens. But in the attempt to realize this ideal, difficulties were encountered on every side. Strangers came to the colony preaching foreign and conflicting doctrines: these must be silenced or excluded. Hence after an ineffectual attempt to dissuade or silence them, the authorities banished Roger Williams in 1636 and Anne Hutchinson soon afterwards. Between 1656 and 1661 came the long struggle with the Quakers, and although the Puritans were unable either to silence or to exclude *them* and at last accepted the inevitable and ceased persecution, they never really gave up the strict theocratic idea until the issuance of the New Charter of William and Mary (1692) which secured liberty of conscience to all but "Papists" and extended the franchise to all freeholders fulfilling certain property qualifications.

Within the colony, too, there was an ever increasing tolerant party. This is indicated by the constituency gained by Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. This tolerant element was also, doubtless, influential in putting an end to the persecutions of the Quakers. Among such "liberals" should be counted (1) the malcontents or "anti-administration party" which tends to develop in every community where one faction holds the power for an extended period, (2) many of the young people born in the colony but chafing under the strict rule of their elders, and (3) all persons who had come under

the influence of the Plymouth Colony of "Separatists," who had come to America to gain freedom of conscience and not to establish a "Theocracy." That differences of opinion on many important subjects existed almost from the beginning, is well shown by the fact that the First Synod of Churches in 1637 succeeded in unearthing "82 opinions some blasphemous, others erroneous and all unsafe," besides "9 unwholesome opinions," all of which it consigned "to the devil of hell from whence they came."

Within the Puritan Theocracy itself an important doctrinal change had gradually taken place which is of vital importance for our discussion, being in fact the central question of the revival theology:—the nature of "regeneration"—the doctrine of the "new birth." The original Theocracy had been composed wholly of church-members, born and reared in England. These people had been baptized in infancy or early childhood, and at maturity, upon experiencing conversion, had been received into the church as apparently regenerate and hence on their way to Heaven. It was the most zealous only that were willing to leave their ancestral homes to brave the unknown perils of the western wilderness. But among those born in New England, especially in the second generation from the settlers, there were many good people who, although duly baptized in infancy, never experienced conversion; and as they were thus never received into "full communion," *their* children were not even baptized. It looked as if many young people were thus drifting away from the church, and to retain them the "Half-way Covenant" was devised (1657-1662) with the provision that descendants of baptized church-members should be baptized and admitted to part of the privileges of church members although not received at the Lord's Supper. This action of course gravely affected popular ideas of regeneration: from being the all-important and central thing in life—necessary even for respectability and citizenship—it was now pushed back into a secondary place, and although it was still regarded as essential for ultimate salvation, the general tendency was to take one's own time about the matter. The final step was taken by "the venerable Stoddard" who in 1707 published a sermon in which he maintained "that sanctification is not a necessary qualification to partaking of the Lord's Supper" and "that the Lord's Supper was a converting ordinance." This theory found ready acceptance and was soon widely adopted in New England. The result was marked. Instead of the strict Calvinism which taught that man was totally depraved and could never do or think anything aright until God had poured out His divine grace and regenerated his life, there arose a sort of Arminian self-suffi-

ciency. Morality, not conversion, now became the chief care in life. And as the unregenerate found themselves quite able to commence and carry on a series of "good works" without supernatural aid, they soon came to conceive this as their chief duty: conversion was God's work—let Him accomplish it in His own time. With this separation of morality from regeneration, conversion itself assumed a mystical, inexplicable character. Moral and capable men found their way even into the pulpits: who could tell whether one had been converted or not, if it did not show in changed conduct? In such a community there was imminent danger of a return to the doctrine of "salvation through works," and Jonathan Edwards's great sermons on "justification by faith" were most seasonable for leading New England back to Calvinism.

There was still another complication in the religious situation. The New Charter had thrown open the colony to invasion from abroad; and very soon theologically heterogeneous elements began to make their appearance. The skeptical and rationalistic tendencies of England found fertile soil in America. Episcopal chapels were erected and the hated Prayer Book used in public services. Even Arianism and Socinianism found able supporters.

Add to all this the rapid turning of popular thought away from internal theological debate toward the great question of the proper relation of the colony to the mother-country, the demoralizing influence of the Indian Wars of the early 18th century, and the unsettling effects of westward migration,—and we can easily understand the "religious apathy,"—the unemotional, intellectual type of religious life—of which the preachers of the period complain so bitterly.

REVIVALS OF 1734-5 AND 1740-1.

Such was the condition of New England when in 1727 Jonathan Edwards was called to Northampton, Mass., to act as the colleague of his respected grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. Something must be done and Edwards proved to be the man able to do it. In the fall of 1734 he began a series of sermons directed against the moral and theological evils of his time, which resulted in a wonderful awakening of religious interest, so that "there was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world." Before May, 1735, the little town of Northampton with its population of 200 families boasted of "300 souls savingly brought home to Christ," and the people of Northampton, with those of many surrounding towns, were converted from a condition of low morality and religious indifference, to that of exemplary Christians, in feeling and conduct.

This revival of 1734-5 was widely discussed in the Colonies and upon the Continent, and in 1737 Edwards, at the request of Drs. Watts and Guyse, of England, wrote his "Narrative of Surprising Conversions," which spread the news still further. As a result America was prepared for great things when Whitefield, the wonderful young evangelist of the Church of England, came to Boston in 1740. Then began that remarkable series of revivals which has so fitly been named "the Great Awakening." Night after night crowds rushed to hear him, and responded to his stirring appeals with emotional outbursts. Here, and everywhere that he stopped in his great tour through the Colonies, large numbers professed conversion. Everywhere religion revived. Numbers of the ablest ministers of the time took up the work at home, many others became itinerant preachers like Whitefield. Among the most successful were Gilbert Tennent (a Presbyterian of New Jersey who went to Boston soon after Whitefield's departure and became a very successful revivalist), Jonathan Edwards and his pupil Joseph Bellamy, Parsons, Wheelock, Pomeroy and Graham. So strong was the religious movement that few people could keep still and soon there appeared large numbers of lay-exhorters, "men of all occupations who are vain enough to think themselves fit to be teachers of others," "of no learning" and "small capacities," "babes in age as well as understanding," "chiefly young persons, sometimes lads or rather boys—nay women and girls"—even "negroes."

Such a movement is bound to take on extreme forms. This tendency soon developed, and under the lead of such extremists as Barber, who claimed immediate revelation and direction from the Holy Spirit, and Davenport, whose methods were so irrational that a Boston jury and the Connecticut legislature both pronounced him insane—under the lead of such men the emotional element was so emphasized that their religious meetings became little else than riots.

Of course there was a vehement protest against such a development. In this all the best men united. But many went still further and soon we find two distinct parties arising, both regretting the excesses and disorders that had become widely prevalent, but taking different views of their frequency and meaning: one party considering these disorders as exceptions, and looking upon the movement in general as a glorious work of God and therefore to be promoted; the other party considering disorders to be the rule, and true conversions the exception,—and regarding the movement therefore as a work of the devil upon corrupt human nature, and to be heartily discouraged.

THE "OLD LIGHTS" AND THE "NEW LIGHTS."

Jonathan Edwards was far more than a theoretical reasoner ; above all things he was a practical worker. Called upon to meet a situation he used the tools at his hands—he preached the Calvinism that was his by birthright and by training—but all the time his mind was intent upon the needs of the times and he used his theology as a means toward the ends of higher morality and purer personal religion. Out of his attempt to explain the facts of his own religious experience and that of many of his hearers in terms of Calvinism, grew up the New England theology ; out of his experience in revival work grew up the working principle of the "New Light" party—"Press unto the Kingdom."

A critical study of the results of the revival led Edwards to see a certain well marked series of steps from religious indifference to what he regarded as true conversion. These steps, as he observed them in his own experience and in the experience of others, he tried to explain by his theological system.

First comes the conviction of one's sinfulness and guilt ; then a period of intense struggle during which the awakened sinner tries by all sorts of works and religious exercises to set himself right with God—often ending in despair and utter hopelessness of ever attaining justification and salvation ; at last there comes to many—not to all—a beautiful peace and joy ; all the world seems new ; all doubts and struggles subside and the convert's heart is filled with a sense of assurance and peace. To this Edwards applied his Calvinism. Natural man, corrupt by nature, must be awakened from indifference by the strongest possible presentation of the facts of his sinful condition—the infinity of his sin as against an infinite God—and be warned with all the terrors of hell if he continues in such a state. Realizing his perilous condition, man will of course make every effort to save himself. But man is absolutely dependent on God for saving grace, and if God does not choose to elect him, despair and utter hopelessness must be the end of man's efforts. If, on the other hand, God does elect him, conversion—a new nature—will follow and he will be at peace with God, righteous and completely happy. All this has a logical basis in Calvinism. Total depravity, unconditional election and irresistible grace easily justify such preaching and explain its results.

But Edwards saw another fact in the revival movement not so easily accounted for. He observed that a large proportion of those who, after conviction of sin, exerted themselves to get salvation, at last succeeded and showed convincing signs of a changed nature. This pointed in just the opposite direction from unconditional election. Why does God elect the most

zealous? This question Edwards never satisfactorily answered; but on this observed fact, inconsistent as it is with his theological system, he based his whole practical revival work. "Press unto the Kingdom" was the shibboleth of Edwards and his school. "Be violent for the Kingdom of Heaven." Why? Does God save any man for his works? No. Justification is by faith alone. Can man save himself? No. Saving grace is the gift of God. Can man even turn to God before God gives his grace? No. Man's will follows his inclination and his inclination is away from God and always must be till God changes his nature and gives man a taste for divine things. Why then preach that man should be violent for the Kingdom? Because scripture clearly commands men to do so, and because observation shows that a large proportion of the most zealous succeed and receive saving grace. This is the "Edwardean paradox"—urging man to turn to God, when, according to the doctrine of total depravity, man is powerless to turn toward God, till God regenerates him.

Such is the basis of the school called "New Lights"—Christian religious experience interpreted by means of Calvinism—Christian religious loyalty and zeal rewarded by success as practical observation shows.

But by another set of men the whole revival movement was explained in another way. The "Old Lights" to be sure were at first conspicuous mainly because of their protests against the emotional excesses and the practical disorders of the movement, but as we look deeper we see that back of all this was the belief that the kingdom of heaven could *not* be thus taken by storm. They had the same Calvinism, but their observations led them to a different conclusion concerning the results of the revival movement. The New Lights claimed many true conversions and admitted incidental disorders. Such being the results the sort of preaching and the methods that attained them must be the best. But when it was claimed that true conversions were few and disorders general, the aspect of the whole subject was changed. Edwards had no Calvinistic basis for his revival watchword "Press unto the Kingdom." The Old Lights denied him a practical basis by claiming that his observations were incorrect. As for the means of grace—God has commanded their use as a preparation for salvation and man must obey God's commands; but as for "pressing unto the kingdom"—this is unscriptural and illogical as is every tendency to persuade or induce God to act before in his sovereign pleasure he feels disposed. We have, then, two distinct parties within New England Calvinism: the "Old Lights" preaching morality and the use of the "means of grace," but consistently leaving conversion to God

and patiently awaiting his action; the "New Lights" preaching the "Edwardean Paradox"¹ (we are helpless to do anything good till God inclines our wills to Him, but it is our duty to "press into the kingdom") and claiming a practical basis for their position in the success of their preaching as indicated by the large number of converts.

Thus the burden of proof was thrown upon the New Lights. The question became one of an explanation of observations. The New Lights must prove that as a result of their work there had been many true conversions. We shall consider rather fully the list of abuses and disorders against which Chauncy writes in his "Seasonable Thoughts," because this will give us a picture of the movement; but our chief interest must be with Edwards's defence of the movement wherein, while lamenting most of the abuses against which Chauncy writes, he also seeks to give a positive basis for his system by showing the true nature of conversion. If conversion is what he claims it is, then the large number of such converts proves the activity of the Holy Spirit and justifies his method of "pressing into the kingdom."

I. REVIVAL ACTIVITY OF THE NEW LIGHTS.

As we have seen, enthusiasm for the revival movement was very widespread, and large numbers both of ministers and laymen began to travel about and preach wherever they could get an audience. Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent were very prominent, but they do not fall within the province of this paper. Joseph Bellamy became very famous for his great oratorical powers, holding "the passions of the auditory at his command." Of many other men we hear considerable, but the most important for us is the founder of the New England school—Jonathan Edwards. Just what was his method? What did he preach and how? What were the results?

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

The purpose of Edwards in his revival work was to foster in his hearers a warm emotional type of religion, touched and vivified by a sense of immediate communion with God. This he felt sure would blossom in noble Christian conduct and thus redeem the community from the laxity of morals so prevalent

¹A popular version of the Edwardean Paradox quoted by Chas. G. Finney in his sermon on "The Traditions of the Elders."

You can and you can't.
 You shall and you sha'n't.
 You will and you won't.
 You'll be damned if you do n't.

at the time. Thus his aim was primarily religious—with morality as the fruit of religion.

The unconverted—the sinner—must be awakened. How? In his natural state man is sinful and has no moral quality to which one may appeal. Hence the appeal is to selfishness—man's hope of future Heaven, rather than Hell. Over and over we find in his sermons the following series of arguments:

1. The unconverted are in a condition of infinite sinfulness—guilty of sin against infinite goodness and love—and therefore justly deserve the infinite punishment which now awaits them and from which only the goodness of God has kept them free up to this time.

2. This punishment is utterly beyond imagination—universal, eternal, intolerable—the most extreme that an infinite God infinitely enraged can invent.

3. The only hope of escape is by the free gift of salvation from God. This cannot be won by man's efforts, but if one is violent in seeking salvation and diligent in fulfilling all the duties God has prescribed, there is a probability that God will give him saving grace—although, of course, He is not bound to do so. Therefore, be violent for the kingdom, give up your whole life to violent endeavors to press into the kingdom. Such discourses, he says, have been the ones most remarkably blessed.

This perhaps does not seem especially awakening to us—the whole scheme may appear ridiculous and tend to raise mirth rather than fear and conviction of sin. But we must not forget the changed conditions of our times. In a day when belief in Hell was as firm and fundamental as our belief in the laws of gravity, what a powerful weapon the preacher had in his hands. The Catholic Church shows us how compelling this belief can be made. Then add to this fact the tremendous power wielded by the man Jonathan Edwards, in whom we find such a striking combination of searching irrefutable logic with a vivid oriental imagination kindled by strong religious emotions and founded upon a most severe but triumphant religious experience; taking all this into consideration is it so surprising or inexplicable that a “great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town and among persons of all degrees and all ages; that “many were awakened with a sense of their miserable condition by nature, and the danger they are in of perishing eternally;” that large numbers were so alarmed as to “immediately quit their sinful practices” and “devote themselves to an earnest application to the means of salvation, reading, prayer, meditation, the ordinances of God's house and private conferences, making constant inquiry ‘What shall we

do to be saved?" "that some were so overcome with fear as to cry out in the midst of the service, or to weep or turn pale, or even fall into convulsions; that some, indeed, were so affected that their health was impaired causing them to sink down under the intensity of their contending emotions. Perhaps it will be well to look at some of the revival sermons of Edwards in detail. Take for instance his famous sermon preached at Enfield, July 8, 1741, upon the text "Their foot shall slide in due time," from Deut. 32:35, entitled "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." His proposition is "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of Hell, but the mere pleasure of God." This he discusses under ten headings: (1) "There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men unto Hell at any moment." (2) "They deserve to be cast into Hell; so that Divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them." (3) "They are already under a sentence of condemnation to Hell." (4) "They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God that is expressed in the torments of Hell." (5) "The devil stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own at what moment God shall permit him." (6) "There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles raging that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraint." (7) "This is no security to wicked men for one moment that there are no visible signs of death at hand." (8) "Natural men's care and prudence to preserve their own lives or the care of others to preserve them does not secure them a moment." (9) "All wicked men's pains and contrivances which they use to escape Hell, while they continue to reject Christ and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from Hell one moment." (10) "God has laid himself under no obligations by any promises to keep any natural man out of Hell one moment."

By way of application Edwards pictures the everlasting torments of hell in glowing colors, and enlarges at length upon the infinitely terrible wrath of his angry God, with a reiteration of the utter impossibility of escape for sinners unconverted. But now is a time of "extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the doors of mercy wide open and stands calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners—a day wherein many are flocking to him and pressing into the kingdom of God." "Therefore let every one that is out of Christ and hanging over the pit of Hell now awake and fly from the wrath to come."

This sermon can easily be paralleled by many others; as, for example, that of May, 1735, entitled: "Wrath upon the

wicked to the uttermost ;" that of April, 1739, upon "The Eternity of Hell Torments ;" or that of April, 1741, to prove "The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable."

Of course Edwards preached upon other subjects also, but the sermons that awakened his hearers were those that appealed to the emotions, especially the emotion of fear, cast in the form of cold logic but illumined with a surprising wealth of brilliant and vigorous imagery.

DAVENPORT AND THE EXTREMISTS.

But, as we have seen, there was another wing of the new lights whose violent measures and emotional excesses brought the whole movement into disrepute. Of these men the most prominent was James Davenport, whom Chauncy seems to regard as the most extreme example of all the "Things of a bad and dangerous tendency," against which he writes his "Seasonable Thoughts upon the state of Religion in New England." "It is well known," he says, "no preacher in the new way has been more noted for his instrumentality in producing these shriekings and faintings and tremblings than the Rev. James Davenport, of Southold." And one of the charges exhibited and proved against this Mr. Davenport, when brought before the General Assembly of Connecticut, was that "he endeavored by unwarrantable means to terrify and affect his hearers," namely "(1) By pretending some extraordinary discovery and assurance of the very near approach of the end of the world.

"(2) By an indecent and affected imitation of the Agony and Passion of our blessed Saviour, and also by voice and gesture, of the surprise, horror, amazement of persons supposed to be sentenced to eternal misery. And

"(3) By a too peremptory and unconditional denouncing damnation against such of his auditory as he looked upon as opposers, vehemently crying out that he saw hell flames flashing in their faces and that they were now! now! dropping down to Hell!"

"An account of Mr. Davenport's preaching," says Chauncy, "not altogether unlike this, a gentlemen in Connecticut wrote to one of the ministers of this town, upon his own knowledge, in these words: 'At length he turned his discourse to others and with the utmost strength of his lungs addressed himself to the congregation under these and such-like expressions, viz.: You poor unconverted creatures in the seats, in the pews, in the galleries, I wonder you don't drop into Hell! It would not surprise me. I should not wonder at it, if I should see you drop down this minute into Hell. You Pharisees, hypocrites;

now, now, now you are going right into the bottom of Hell. I wonder you don't drop into Hell by scores and hundreds. Etc.' And in this manner he ended the sermon! 'T is then added: After a short prayer he called for all the distressed persons (which were near twenty) into the foremost seats. Then he came out of the pulpit and stripped off his upper garments and got up into the seats and leapt up and down some times and clapt his hands together and cried out in these words: 'The war goes on, the fight goes on, the Devil goes down, the Devil goes down;' and then betook himself to stamping and screaming most dreadfully. And what is it more than might be expected to see people so affrighted as to fall into shrieks and fits under such methods as these? "

Just how much there was of this extreme sort of work it is very hard to determine accurately. Chauncy arraigns Messrs. Pomeroy, Wheelock, Allen and Bliss as being of one soul and as having the same method of conduct as Davenport, "though I believe," he says, "Mr. Davenport has outdone them all." Chauncy does not attribute such excesses to Edwards, nor does he make this his main criticism of Whitefield and Tennent, but he considers such work to be the logical result of emotional preaching; and because of the wide prevalence of such excesses he is convinced that the Revival is not the work of the Holy Spirit and should be suppressed.

II. CRITICISM OF THE REVIVAL MOVEMENT BY CHAUNCY.

As we have seen, the great question at issue between the Old and the New Lights was "what shall we do to be saved?" The New Lights pointed to large numbers of professing converts and said, "See; those men got salvation by being violent for the kingdom of heaven; therefore that is the proper way. We of course do not claim that man can thus save himself, but observation teaches us that this method succeeds." The Old Lights replied: "A good part of your professing converts are no converts at all. The movement has been a series of emotional outbursts which are no sign of true conversion, and the unchristian spirit of many of the leaders of the movement, together with the disorders and extravagances which have been everywhere prevalent, prove that the movement is not a work of the spirit. True conversion is always marked by a change of nature, and a changed nature always blossoms into the fruits of the Spirit which are described in Scripture." Thus, the real question is the nature of true conversion. Chauncy and Edwards both claim that conversion consists in a change of nature, and both see in Christian conduct the chief sign of this regeneration, but Edwards's idea of the affections as a great part of true religion is lacking in Chauncy, and as a result

those emotional excesses which are so easily disposed of by Edwards are an insuperable barrier to Chauncy, and lead him to an opposite opinion of the revival as a whole.

In Chauncy's opinion the fundamental error of the revival movement is the belief that true religion consists in emotional expressions and not in Christian conduct ; and from this belief spring the various disorders and excesses against which he writes.

1. Errors in Doctrine. These may be thus summarized : If true religion consists in emotional expressions, then the more emotion one has the more religious one is ; and since all religion is impossible to man in his corrupt natural state, such an emotional awakening is clear proof that God's saving grace is working within him. Emotion being a sign of the presence of the Spirit it is possible for every one to know whether he is savingly converted and to tell the same of his fellows—whether laymen or ministers. The ability to state the exact time and circumstances of one's first emotional awakening is a proof of one's conversion. If one cannot tell when he was converted doubtless he is not converted. With the spirit in one's heart working to save, what need has man to perform the "means" of grace which God intended only as a preparation for the Spirit's coming? How natural to attribute dreams and unusual visions and the sudden remembrance of Scriptural texts to the direct inspiration of the Spirit and therefore to claim for oneself special divine guidance in all the acts of life—in deed and speech—such as the Apostles enjoyed !

2. Errors in Practice. Such theories are very fruitful of erroneous methods.

(A) *Appeal to Emotions.*

If emotion is the essence of religion, and bodily effects the clearest signs of its presence, then any methods which tend to arouse the emotions are legitimate—nay, most admirable. Hence the great effort to induce extreme fear in the minds of the hearers with "all the terrible words they can get together and in such a manner as to naturally tend to put weaker minds out of possession of themselves," so that "'tis no unusual thing for persons to be plunged into the utmost agony and distress, which is often attended with a trembling of the body, fainting, falling down, etc."

"The way in which these fears have been excited in many places is not in my opinion (he says) the best evidence in favor of them. People have been too much applied to, as though the preachers rather aimed at putting their passions into a ferment, than filling them with such a reasonable solicitude as is the effect of a just exhibition of the truths of God to their

understandings. I have myself been present when an air of seriousness reigned visibly through a whole congregation : they were all silent and attentive, having their eye fastened on the minister as though they would catch every word that came from his mouth ; and yet because they did not cry out or swoon away, they were upbraided with their hardness of heart, and ranked among those who were sermon-proof, gospel-glutted, and every topic made use of, with all the voice and action the minister was master of, to bring forward a general shriek in the assembly ; nay, in order to give the people a plain intimation of what he wanted, this same preacher sometimes told them of the wonderful effects wrought by the sermon he was then preaching—how in such a congregation they were all melted and dissolved, and in another so overpowered that they could not help screaming out or falling down as though they had been struck dead. Nay one of the preachers in this new way was so open, some months ago, as in plain words to call on the people to cry out, and plead with them to do so. This he did several times in one sermon, and had upon it so many loud cries. And 't is too well known to need much to be said upon it that the gentlemen whose preaching has been most remarkably accompanied with these extraordinaries, not only use in their addresses to the people all the terrible words they can get together, but in such a manner as naturally tends to put weaker minds out of possession of themselves." Then follows an account quoted from the letter of a friend in the country, whose record, Chauncy assures us, may be relied upon, "For it is given by one capable of making observations, and who bears as unblemished a character as most ministers in the country." This record is as follows :

"Under the preaching and exhortations of these itinerants and exhorters (the manner of which is frequently very boisterous and shocking, and adapted to the best of their skill to alarm and surprise the imagination and passions), 't is no unusual thing for persons to be plunged into the utmost anxiety and distress, which is often attended with a trembling of the body, fainting, falling down, etc. The preacher now frequently grows more tempestuous and dreadful in his manner of address, and seems to endeavor all he can to increase and spread the rising consternation and terror of their souls, which by this means is sometimes spread over a great part of an assembly, and in a few minutes from its first appearance. I have seen the 'struck' (as they are called) and distressed brought together from the several parts of the assembly into the square body by themselves, smiting, stamping, and crying out to them with a mighty voice in the most terrible manner and language : the poor creatures fainting, screeching, and bitterly crying out

under them. You may easily think what terrors of imagination, distraction of passions, and perplexity of thought they endured. I was last summer at an evening lecture at a neighboring parish, at which one of the most famous preachers in the new method carried on. He had entered but a little way in his sermon (which was delivered in a manner sufficiently terrible), when there began to be some commotion among the young women. This inspired him with new life. He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and plentifully poured down terrors upon them. About half a score of young women were presently thrown into violent hysteric fits. I carefully observed them. When he grew calm and moderate in his manner, though the things delivered were equally awakening, they by degrees grew calm and still; when he again assumed the terrible and spake like thunder, the like violent strugglings immediately returned upon them from time to time. Sometimes he put a mighty emphasis upon little unmeaning words, and delivered a sentence of no importance with a mighty energy, yet the sensible effect was as great as when the most awful truth was brought to view."

A similar account Chauncy quotes from the Boston Post-Boy, No. 391, which speaks of itinerant preachers as follows: "Their main design in preaching seems not so much to inform men's judgments, as to terrify and affright their imaginations: by awful words and frightful representations to set the congregation into hideous shrieks and outcries. And to this end, and in every place where they come, they represent that God is doing extraordinary things in other places, and that they are some of the last hardened wretches that stand out; that this is the last call that ever they are likely to hear; that they are now hanging over the pit of destruction, and just ready this moment to fall into it; that hell fire now flashes into their faces, and that the devil now stands ready to seize upon them and carry them to hell; and that they will often times repeat the awful words 'Damned! Damned! Damned!' three or four times over."

(B) *Censoriousness.*

If strong emotions give one assurance of conversion, it is easy to conclude that those who have not experienced the same kind of awakening are unconverted—are therefore not true Christians and certainly no fit persons to occupy the pulpits of the land. This censorious spirit "appeared first of all in Mr. Whitefield, who seldom preached but he had something or other in his sermon against unconverted ministers." And as though he had not done enough in preaching he expressed his

fears in his Journal of New England lest "many, nay the most that preach do not experimentally know Christ."

Gilbert Tennent showed a like spirit. Chauncy says "His preaching in Boston was censorious beyond what can be easily imagined." "But the most remarkable instance of this kind is the Rev. Mr. James Davenport, of Southold," who was so violent in abuse of the ministers that many refused to let him preach in their pulpits, and when brought to Court for his libellous conduct he was acquitted only on the ground that to use such language he must be "*non compos mentis*."

This same censorious spirit soon became widespread all over the country among the common people, "Parents condemning their children and children their parents, etc."

(C) *Claim of Immediate Inspiration.*

If religious emotions are a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, how natural it is to claim that verses of Holy Scripture coming into the mind with great force and peculiar fitness to one's conditions are the direct gift of the Holy Spirit and intended to guide one's conduct; that dreams and visions and unusual imaginations are the result of special revelation; that in this time of special outpouring of the Spirit one should depend on such special illumination to guide one in even the most trivial matters or wait for promptings from the Spirit before acting at all.

"Mr. Whitefield," says Chauncy, "had evidently a turn of mind too much disposing him toward this way" of interpreting impulses, coincidences and dreams as revelations.

Davenport was extreme in this tendency as in many others, claiming divine guidance in daily conduct and revelations of various kinds, laying special emphasis upon "some extraordinary discovery and assurance of the very near approach of the end of the world," and even attempting to cure "a poor woman, living in the next parish to Mr. Davenport's, counted religious, who had been totally distracted for a long time and dumb for a season. Mr. Davenport, possessed with a notion (says Chauncy) that he could pray her into her right mind and to the use of her tongue, though the Philistines could afford her no relief, spent a day of fasting and prayer for that purpose, with a number of his admiring brethren. At this meeting (I think it was) he set a certain day, by which time, if not before, he was assured she would be delivered and recover her speech. On that very day the woman died without having spoken a word or discovering any sign of being in her right mind. When this was objected to him he said his faith was verified and his prayer answered in the event; for that she was delivered that very day by being received to Heaven."

Yet even Davenport was outdone in claims of spiritual direction by his friend and companion Barber. Upon hearing of Whitefield's successes Davenport and Barber "applied themselves in an extraordinary manner to seek of God this outpouring of his Spirit upon the land," and "particularly that he would please more fully to instruct them what he was about to do and give them a great share of the Spirit." After a time certain texts were "powerfully impressed upon Barber's mind" and he began itinerant exhorting. As he counted that he had a special prophetic mission from God "somewhat like that of our Lord's disciples," "he took no money with him, neither change of apparel nor shoes, but was shod with boots; and as he passed along through the several parishes of Southold he publicly declared that he had laid aside all study and forethought of what he should deliver in his public speeches to the people (some who heard him thought so) and depended wholly on the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, and that it was given him in that hour from time to time what he should say." Finally he reached an obscure place called Oldman "where he abode some months, refusing for a long time to preach to them any more," "neither could he be persuaded to remove thence" but "led an inactive, idle life till he was grown very fat and ragged, alleging in his justification that he had received no direction from the Spirit to remove thence, and must remain stationed there so long as the Cloud abode upon the Tabernacle."

Standing upon the same claim of immediate inspiration and direction were also the numerous lay exhorters who with "presumptuous dependence upon the Blessed Spirit despised learning (speaking slightly of schools and colleges) under the notion of immediate impressions from the Spirit, and that his assistance would more than supply the want of learning," and by neglecting Bible study and the means of grace therein appointed "reflect dishonor upon the written revelations of God."

(D) *Itinerant Preaching*

This custom was a natural development of the aggressive policy of the New Lights Party. The method had its rise, says Chauncy (at least in these parts), from Mr. Whitefield who was soon imitated by Gilbert Tennent. The scheme appealed to others and soon "the method of itinerant preaching became common." Edwards and Bellamy both made preaching tours, and Davenport and Barber with many others almost totally deserted their parishes and spent their whole time in such trips. This was a favorite method with lay-exhorters, who in many ways made themselves a nuisance.

This practice Chauncy vehemently attacks as improper in principle and pernicious in results.

(1) Ministers have no right to desert their own parishes without the consent of their congregations.

(2) Itinerants of any kind have no right to enter other men's parishes unless invited, and then should not take all the credit for results, but should consider the preparation made in the work of the regular pastor. Especially evil is the system when the itinerants push in against the wishes of the settled ministers.

(3) "The tendency of this practice is confusion and disorder." It tends to dissolve the connection of each pastor with his people if the pastor constantly deserts them. It leads to division of congregations into parties and the formation of separate bodies—especially as most of these itinerants claim spiritual direction and are very censorious of all who oppose them or disagree with their views.

Such then is Chauncy's criticism of the Revival Movement. It is founded on a wrong conception of what true religion is, and so has unduly magnified the emotional element in religion, leading to all sorts of excesses and extravagances. It has been carried on by methods which are inexcusable; it has been attended with numerous harsh and unchristian attacks upon those who do not sympathize with it; it has resulted in all sorts of confusion in public worship and in the government and harmony of the church bodies—unfair attacks upon settled pastors and the division of many churches into separate congregations; and far from promoting Christian life and showing those results which are the legitimate and Scriptural fruits of the Spirit it has led to spiritual pride, censure, conflict, idleness, a neglect of the appointed "means of grace" and a dishonoring of Holy Scripture.

3. TRUE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

But the Old Lights were more than a mere party of opposition. They too had positive theories of man's natural state, his need of conversion, the nature of conversion and its results. Their doctrine was the Calvinism with which Edwards started, colored a little with rationalism and Arminianism.

CHAUNCY'S IDEA OF A WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

Chauncy looks upon man as in a state of natural corruption. He stands in the greatest need of "that real change of heart and life without which one cannot be qualified for an admission into the Kingdom of God." This change of nature, called in Scripture "sometimes the new Birth, sometimes the Spirit's Renovation, sometimes Conversion or a being turned from

darkness to light and from the power of sin and Satan unto God," is entirely the result of the free action of God's Spirit upon man. God uses various means and instruments to effect this change, but in substance it is the same "in all places and among all people under Heaven." Generally there is first a preparation in the minds of sinners, "whereby God opens to the sinner a vision of himself in his sinfulness and guilt upon which he is driven out of his former case and filled with anxiety and distress." "This is called by Divines Conviction." After this preparation begins the real work of God which is secret and hidden, "effected in the universal frame of their mind. It principally lies in a new heart, another soul, in other views and intentions, other thoughts, sentiments, other principles and springs of action." And when this transformation of nature is complete the new Christian character shows itself in cessation from sin, and a high degree of love, joy, peace, righteousness, holiness and such fruits of the spirit as are indicated in Scripture. This new nature, or "temper of mind" is a "never failing source of good works," and while no one can have absolute assurance of salvation, and "good men may be in the dark about their spiritual condition," yet it is much more likely that those who show "the fruits of the Spirit" mentioned in the Bible, are really acting under the influence of saving grace than those who give no such signs of a changed nature; and as for special revelations, etc., "the least spark of true Christian charity is a better evidence of a work of God in the soul than the greatest ability to show signs and work wonders." Moreover man has something to do. He cannot earn salvation, for this is the gift of God, and of course he cannot "press into the kingdom" against God's will; but God has appointed certain means to be attended in order to the obtainment of that help from the Spirit which is needed for salvation; such as "prayer, reading and hearing God's word and the like," and while he must guard against "the error of placing works in the room of Christ or of free grace," yet "neither the grace of God nor the merits of Christ take away the necessity of a holy life in conformity to the precepts of the Gospel," and "'t is plain, from the same Scriptures, that salvation by Grace through Christ is in the way of obedience—such an obedience as proceeds from a heart purified by faith and purged from dead works to serve the living God." God "no more ordinarily begins than carries on the work of faith as respects its existence and operation in the hearts of sinners without the concurring use of their power and endeavors." "God and man and means are all concerned in salvation."

III. DEFENCE OF THE REVIVALS, BY EDWARDS.

While heartily in sympathy with the movement and one of the chief agents in its spread, yet Edwards at an early date recognized the danger and vehemently opposed the excesses and confusions which appeared in many quarters. In 1742 appeared his "Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion," 74 pages of which he devotes to "showing what things are to be corrected or avoided, in promoting this work or in our behavior under it." Among these we find many of the same things against which Chauncy contended—(1) "censuring professing Christians of good standing in the visible church, as unconverted," attacking ministers as unregenerate "because they seem in comparison with some other ministers to be very cold and lifeless in their ministerial performances," or because of their opposing the revival movement; (2) "spiritual pride"—having a high conceit of one's own light and humility and leading to undue assurance of one's own salvation, the use of harsh and terrible language toward those deemed unconverted, "unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and man," an improper assumption of authority in speech and conduct and often the affecting of "singularity in external appearances" or a "singular way of speaking;" (3) claims of immediate inspiration and revelation from God to guide his saints by means of scripture or impressions and impulses, with belief "that persons ought always to do whatsoever the Spirit of God (though but indirectly) inclines them to do." (4) disregard of consequences that may arise from methods which serve for present edification, such as the careless introduction of "things new and strange and that have a tendency by their novelty to shock and surprise people" and leading to persecution and opposition which in the end will hurt the cause of vital religion;" (5) disregard of external order in matters of religion and use of the means of grace"—confusion in public worship, "singing in the streets going to and coming from worship," neglecting regular family worship and staying "abroad late in the night at religious meetings;" and finally, (6) lay exhorting. Yet while freely admitting all these errors and irregularities and heartily opposing them, Edwards feels that when the movement is judged as it should be, "by its effects and not by its supposed causes," by the whole teaching of scripture and not by a part only, or by one's own experience or by philosophy, or by the history of earlier religious movements¹ which have either shown none of the good effects of this movement or only an exaggerated degree

¹ For earlier revivals, see preface of Chauncy's *Seasonable Thoughts* and beginning of Edwards's *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*.

of its imprudences and excesses, and when the movement is regarded as a whole, separating the good from the bad and not viewed in part,—if thus judged, Edwards feels confident that all will agree with him that the imprudences and disorders of enthusiasts are incidental and exceptional, and the movement as a whole a glorious work of God. As such, Edwards deems it his duty to defend and promote the work; and in 1746, after the emotional excitement of the movement had largely subsided and theological questions were becoming dominant in public thought, he published a book in which he sought to get at the very root of the question. This he called “A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections,” giving us (1) a discussion of the nature of the affections and their importance in religion, showing (2) why there are no certain signs indicating whether or not religious affections as such are truly the work of the Spirit, and (3) indicating what are distinguishing signs of truly gracious and holy affections, *i. e.*, what are the scriptural results of the workings of the Spirit.

NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS.

“God has endued the soul with two principal faculties:” the (1) understanding—“that by which the soul is capable of perception and speculation or by which it discerns and judges things”—and (2) the will or inclination—“that by which the soul is some way inclined with respect to the things it receives or considers—or the faculty by which the soul beholds things, not as an indifferent, unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting.” “The more vigorous and sensible exercises of the will are called the affections. The will and the affections of the soul are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will.”

In some sense the affections differ nothing at all from the will and inclination, and the will never is in any exercise further than it is affected. “The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.”

“All the exercises of inclination and will are concerned either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts—they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it or seeking it, or those by which it is averse from it and opposed to it. Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacency. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief and such like.”

NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

“Religion consists in great part in the affections,” “in the vigorous and lively actings of the inclinations and will of the soul or the fervent exercises of the heart.” This is clearly the kind of religion God insists upon in scripture. It is the kind of religion Christ and the eminent saints of the Bible had; and it follows in reason that as “God hath so constituted human nature that the affections are very much the spring of men’s actions,” therefore, “religion must consist very much in the affections.” True religion of course involves the whole man, and therefore the understanding as well as the will and inclination is called into action; but “true religion consists so much in the affections that there can be no true religion without them.”

NATURAL INABILITY.

The object of a religious man’s thought of course is God. What conception can man form of God? What is essential to true communion? God’s qualities are of two kinds—his natural perfections such as his power, knowledge, eternity, etc., and his moral perfections, such as his holiness and love. Natural men may have a sense of God’s natural perfection and experience such feelings as fear, admiration, joy, etc., but of God’s moral perfections natural man can have no conception. Yet it is on the moral excellencies of God that all truly holy affections are primarily founded. Moreover, natural man has no inclination, no taste for such things and therefore can never have any truly religious affections which consist of a vigorous exercise of the will and inclination towards God. Hence to have true communion with God, man’s nature must be changed. This occurs at conversion.

NATURE OF CONVERSION.

Conversion is accomplished by the influence of the Spirit dwelling in men’s hearts as “a principle of new nature, or a divine supernatural spring of action.” The result of this indwelling of the Spirit is that the convert receives as it were a new spiritual sense—as “different from any former kinds of sensations of the mind as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses.” Yet this new spiritual sense is not a new “faculty” but a new principle of nature, a new spring of action. Man continues to use “understanding,” but with this new spiritual power he is able to gain “a cordial sense of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of (God and) divine things.” Man continues to use his other faculty,—the will or inclination, but with this changed nature comes an inclination towards God instead of towards

sin. Thus both his faculties are affected and with the new view of God's moral perfections and the new taste for divine things come those truly religious affections which consist in a vigorous exercise of the will and inclination toward God for his moral excellence.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, IN LIFE AND CONDUCT.

Very widespread has been the mistake of attributing to the action of the Spirit many effects which are no signs, either of the presence or absence of the Spirit. Such a mistake has encouraged excesses and helped to bring the whole movement into disrepute.

The following things,—we can now perceive—are no signs either of the presence or the absence of the Spirit, for while they may accompany true conversion, they may also be produced where there is no true conversion, merely by the exercise of man's natural powers:

- (1) A high degree of religious affections.
- (2) Great effects on the body.
- (3) Fluency, fervor, or abundance of religious talk.
- (4) That religious affections arise without any effort on our part to excite them.
- (5) That religious affections come to the mind in a remarkable manner with texts of Scripture.
- (6) That there is an appearance of love in them.
- (7) That there arise many kinds of religious affections together.
- (8) That comforts and joys follow a certain order in appearing.
- (9) That they dispose persons to be zealous in religion.
- (10) That they dispose persons to praise and glorify God.
- (11) That they make persons confident of salvation.
- (12) That the accounts persons give of them are very affecting.

“Nothing hinders but that all these things may meet together in man and yet they be without a spark of grace in their hearts.”

On the other hand there are certain distinguishing signs of the presence of the Spirit,—that is, there are certain effects which will always follow if the Spirit is present, but it must not be assumed that God has given us any signs by which to be absolutely certain that we ourselves, or any others, are savingly converted. (“Let no saint however eminent and however near to God, think himself out of danger.”) These signs, then, do not prove the presence of the Spirit, but merely indicate it. Their absence, however, is good proof that the Spirit is absent.

(1) True religious affections, as we have seen, arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, which by Divine operation upon man's nature transforms it, giving a new sense by which man may rejoice in the moral excellence of divine things, enlightening the understanding and inclining the will towards God.

(2) The result of this transformation within is seen outwardly in the daily conduct of the convert. The regenerated Christian will show tenderness of heart, "such a spirit of Christian meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy" as appeared in Christ, and all the scriptural fruits of the Spirit in "beautiful symmetry and proportion." This outward change in the Christian is the great sign of the Spirit's presence to oneself and to one's fellows. "Christian practice is the sign of signs in this sense, that it is the great evidence which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness." It is "as much the proper experiment and evidence of the superior inclination of the heart as the motion of the balance with different weights in opposite scales, is the proper experiment of the superior weight."

Such is Edwards's defence of the Revival Movement. In his opinion large numbers had been savingly converted; they had experienced true religious affections, and showed in their changed outward lives clear evidence of their new nature.

HALF CENTURY OF RELIGIOUS APATHY.

The Revival activity of 1735-42 was followed by a half century of popular indifference and a low status of religious and moral life. The action of the Connecticut May Court of 1742, in forbidding itinerant preaching, and the condemnation of many of the revival methods by the "Annual Ministerial Convention" of May, 1743, did much to cool religious enthusiasm. As a result of this and the wide spread opposition to many of the revivalists for their censorious spirit as well as their extravagant methods, Whitefield on his return to America in 1744 found a poor field for work and was met with intense opposition from the ministers and colleges which he had so rashly censured. Then came the doctrinal discussion accompanying the development of the New Light principles, and political and military troubles with France and Great Britain, and there seemed no chance for religion until the end of the century.

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